

# FAITH-BASED ARCHAEOLOGY: BARBARA MANN, ARCHAEOLOGISTS, AND THE MOUNDS

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Native Americans, Archaeologists, and the Mounds, by Barbara Alice Mann. xxvi, 520 p., ill., index. New York: Peter Lang.

Much of Dr. Mann's book is simply a well-written, vitriolic diatribe against virtually all archaeologists, tarring them with the same broad brush she uses to lambaste W. K. Moorehead, and especially R. C. Vietzen. She will get little argument here, for the shortcomings of these and other archaeologists are well-known, indeed are ancient if not prehistoric history, so much so that Dr. Mann's detailed relating of their faults is tantamount to wielding a sledgehammer to kill a gnat. Her polemic would command little or no comment were it not for the political and religious agenda to which she applies these facts and various Native American and pan-Indian myths. (Parenthetically, perhaps I should state that while I happen to have no particular quarrel with NAGPRA, the respectful treatment and reburial of human remains, or even eliminating golf at the Licking County Country Club, I do still believe in the rights of private property owners and I am not inclined to accept anyone else's opinion just because they declare that they know they are right).

A fulsome introduction to Mann's book by Ward Churchill, who has been described as a "scholar-activist", does little to obscure the fact that Mann herself is far more activist than she is scholar. Despite literary skill and many of the trappings of scholarship, her ignorance and prejudice is obvious; her supernumary footnotes fail to mask a lack of objectivity and a rampant disregard for accuracy. Equally telling is her flippant denigration of the work of "western" (i.e., Eurocentric) archaeologists: National Park (not "Parks") Service archaeological testing at Mound City is described as "poking about", the professionally executed test excavation at the Newark Great Circle in 1992 as "a sort of training mission...seemingly on a whim". Dr. George Frederick Wright, a respected geologist, archaeologist and minister (D.D., L.L.D.) is dismissed as the Ohio Archaeological and Historical Society's "point man". (Wright was actually president of the Ohio Archaeological and Historical Society from 1907 to 1919). An entirely reasonable suggestion regarding the changing settlement-subsistence patterns of Ohio Hopewell is rejected as "cockamamie", presumably because it gives off a faint whiff of evolution, anathema to any pan-Indian maintaining that Native American traditions are eternal and never-changing. The fact is that societies do change and adapt through time, just as they change and adapt their traditions, as anyone with an open mind and even rudimentary powers of observation should be able to determine.

A caustic author as sure of and as full of herself as Dr. Mann should be more careful with the facts, for example, the Late Prehistoric burials at the Riker Site (in Tuscarawas, not Tuscaroras Co.)

were not "mound burials". The excavations conducted there by Vietzen, Kent State University and others had nothing to do with the Ohio Historical Society, and in no sense of the word did the Society "entrust" the site to Vietzen. Nor was the Fort Ancient Baum Phase Graham Site, which she inaccurately credits Prufer and McKenzie with describing as "Shawnee-linked", excavated "moments ahead of the construction crew", as Mann would have it; I for one was there and know better. If Mann has ever been to Fort Ancient, she must have been conducted by a guide, spiritual or otherwise, because she herself clearly does not know where it is. On p. 98, in ridiculing early archaeologists' theory that some of Ohio's geometric earthworks were military fortification, she says that General Anthony Wayne disproved this "ridiculous inanity" in 1794 when he tried to use "poor, abused Fort Ancient" as a watchtower. (It was actually a mound in present downtown Cincinnati that Wayne partially leveled, about 30 miles southwest of Fort Ancient). Elsewhere Mann Confuses Fort Ancient with the Butler County hilltop fort: in August, 1899, (not 1898) E. O. Randall conducted the American Association for the Advancement of Science on an excursion to fort Ancient – not to the Butler County fort. Similarly, the famous Jacksonstown Stone Mound, confusingly referred to as "the Flint Ridge mound" in this book, is a good ten miles southwest of Flint Ridge and not on the Ridge. As for Licking County's famous "Alligator" or "Opossum" Mound, early sandstone quarrying did not impact the head of the effigy but the left front paw or leg. Squier and David (1848) explicitly state that the landowner had ceased quarrying, in order to prevent further harm to the mound, yet Mann dismisses this documented effort as "rumored", typical of her pattern of stereotyping all 19<sup>th</sup> century attitudes towards the mounds and twisting facts to suit herself.

Dr. Mann is not only geographically challenged but archaeologically challenged as well. On p. 91 she actually manages to confound the Spruce Hill Fort and the Edwin Harness Mound! Despite the presence of some constructional use of stone around the base, Harness can by no means be called a "stone mound". Mann consistently confuses or conflates earthworks and burial mounds, so that they appear to be all one and the same to her, e.g., the Madisonville "mounds". And only a single prehistoric human burial has ever been discovered within the Newark octagon and circle or the Great Circle, which therefore are by no stretch of a normal imagination a "cemetery". But, the more desecrated bones there are or that Mann imagines the better of her argument.

Although, she savagely derides the "fort fantasy" accepted by the 19<sup>th</sup> C. archaeologists, Mann apparently accepts without any qualms the even more preposterous idea recorded by David Zeisberger that the Talligewi (Moundbuilders) "used their mound heights to military advantage, always keeping 'great blocks lying about, in order

that should the enemies attempt to storm the heights these might be rolled upon and among them so as to keep them shut off". Equally as improbable as these boulders of mass destruction is a Shawnee tradition preserved by C. C. Trowbridge that had the Shawnee "acting quickly" to build a fortification, "*carefully transplanting walnut, hickory, and beech trees* so as to have a ready supply of nuts, should they come under siege and be unable to hunt, fish, or hoe for food (*italics added*)". Unless the Shawnee were planning for a Thirty Years War, one doesn't have to be a tree surgeon to understand the physical and temporal constraints on even an army being able to transplant a grove of nut trees sufficiently large to be of use in providing adequate rations for an extended period of siege. In fact, Trowbridge actually qualified this by saying "in some degree be spared from a famine", but the tradition still remains improbable, if taken literally, and in fact Late Prehistoric earthen enclosures are not marked by the presence of walnut, hickory and beech trees or by the incorporation of "a parcel of old logs" in their construction, giving the lie to a literal interpretation of this myth. Interestingly, Mann accepts without comment the fact that these Shawnee warriors "made certain of having fresh water in the event of an attack by enclosing a spring in the center of their fortification". Interesting because only a few pages earlier she quickly dismisses as fantasy J.T. Short's idea that the artificial lake in the middle of the Spruce Hill earthworks was, probably dug to supply water in case of a siege. Although she cites Trowbridge's statement that the Shawnees "never used stone in the construction of their forts", only in construction of sweat houses and stone box graves, she blithely ignores the fact that this conflicts with her declaration that Fort Ancient, where the constructional use of stone is evident in parts of the earthworks, was built by the Shawnee. She also twists Trowbridge's remark that the Shawnee "do not pretend to account for the construction of the very regular fortifications discovered in the west" into a statement about European fortifications, although it is quite clear that Trowbridge was referring to the very regular geometric earthworks *discovered* (which were then considered fortifications) and not to recently constructed European forts and entrenchments. To manage this, she is then forced to dismiss the Hopewellian geometric earthworks as "irregular" circles and squares, when the regularity of their construction is one of their hallmarks.

The Piketon Graded Way, which most archaeologists now agree was a natural feature, is not only Hopewellian but "Cherokee" according to the oral traditions whispered to Mann, as must be the Great Hopewellian Road; but then she also speculates that there were similar "highways" constructed across old Iroquoia; in fact, she says, it was "commonplace" for natives to build long, wide, straight, raised highways connecting ceremonial centers. Unfortunately, the only one

she chooses to mention specifically in western New York is actually a well-known fossil beach ridge originally recognized by DeWitt Clinton in 1811. Clinton accurately described the natural phenomenon in considerable detail and gave ample evidence that this "stupendous natural turnpike covered with gravel" was "the ancient boundary of this great lake (Lake Iroquois)", which was thoroughly mapped and studied more than 100 years ago (Fairchild 1902). Nonetheless, Mann is convinced that because there is an Iroquoian cultural tradition of four "Great White Rots" roads that stretched out from "the Tree of the Great Peace", then these Iroquoian roads were "literal highways laid out to the cardinal directions from the core of Iroquoia". But consistency does not appear to be a virtue of Mann's oral tradition. Just as some of these putative ancient artificial highways are Cherokee and some are Iroquoian, some Hopewellian earthworks are identified as "Cherokee" while the Hopewellian earthworks at Fort Ancient are labelled "a major Shawnee earthwork". Stone mounds are variously allotted to both the Shawnee and the Lenape. Would that it were that simple!

Dr. Mann's knowledge of Ohio history also seems precarious or deliberately jaundiced. According to her, the "unnecessary" Licking Reservoir was built because "settlers in Licking County, Ohio, decided that the rainfall in this very deciduous area was insufficient". Once it was built, "the reservoir turned out to have been unnecessary after all", according to her peculiar view. She provides nary a hint or passing allusion to the fact that this huge reservoir was part of a state wide canal system, built not at the whim of the settlers of *deciduous* Licking Co. but by the State of Ohio, in a major public works and engineering feature that - dare say it? - dwarfs all of the prehistoric earthworks in Ohio.

Contrary to Mann's belief, the placement of Camp Sherman north of Chillicothe and coincidentally on the site of mound City had nothing to do with the "settler myth" that these earthworks had been fortifications. It was based upon the availability of large acreage, abundant water and nearby hills that stimulated the variety of conditions to be expected in the European War. Her disregard of accuracy is well shown by the manner in which she transmogrifies details in Richard Peck's history of Camp Sherman. By her account, several railroad spurs become "myriad warehouse spurs scattered across the area". She decries the fact that wells were sunk along the Scioto River but fails to note that they were well away from Mound City proper. Crossing the line from hyperbole to out-and-out invention, she bemoans the fact that "Similarly, septic tanks were sunk into Mound City, pumping the sewage created by this large-scale operation onto the bones of the ancestors". Peck documents that there was a large septic tank built well downstream from the camp and nowhere near the earthworks. No one disputes the severe impact construction of Camp Sherman had on Mound City, but certainly no purpose is served by such distortion of facts, other than to

demonstrate the intensity of Mann's monomania, or "mythomania".

Mann avers that archaeologists and "Westerners" in general have ignored Indian oral tradition. Yet whom does she quote to buttress her arguments? No less than Heckwelder, Brinton, John Johnston, David Jones and James B. Griffin. Outside the Midwest, more recent archaeologists have frequently used oral tradition to test their theories but - here's the rub - they used archaeological evidence to test those oral traditions. Mann and her ilk want no part of testing their revealed truths. Any first grader who has played the game of "gossip" should understand the problem of oral tradition, and when oral tradition is further cloaked in the guise of religious authority it is no more compelling archaeologically than is the Bible of the Book of Mormon. Contemporary archaeologists almost routinely incorporate oral history and ethno-historical data into the process of testing direct-historic theories or quickly get called to task for failing to do so (e.g., Dunham et al. 2003 and Boyd 2004).

Like much oral tradition, Mann herself appears to have little real concept of time depth in archaeology, citing a Shawnee tradition that they came from a Mexican or Caribbean area in order to discount the idea that they crossed the Bering Strait! But who on earth has ever suggested that the Shawnee did cross over the Bering Strait? (one accounts she pooh-poohs does suggest that they came from the northeast but that scarcely tallies with a Bering Strait origin). Why is she so opposed to the Bering Strait hypothesis in the first place? I suggest for the same ideological and political reason so prevalent today amongst Native American activists - the solipsistic belief that their ancestors have always been in North America therefore, they should still own it. The same reason she will countenance none but the "high counters" in the game of estimating the original population of the Americas - the higher the count the more genocidal the Euros' treatment of the natives. The same reason she ignores or denies the relatively recent origin of the "Mother earth" tradition so fondly adopted by pan-Indians and New Agers alike. Hers is a closed, self-referential and self-reverential system that never needs to question or test itself because it is Revealed Wisdom.

In this vein, Mann ignores the well-documented fact that traditions, whether Indian or not, change through time (mauze 1997). History and anthropology, of course, change, too, but the discipline of History, like archaeology, remains questioning, skeptical, and self-testing by definition, as is true of all good science. The basic disagreement between Mann and archaeologists is a fundamental difference in world view. She does not question Indian authority or oral tradition but accepts both and posits and unchanging truth - much like organized religion - known only to a select, elect few, including of course herself. While she considers herself free to castigate historians and archaeologists for changing their opinions as new evidence becomes available, there is no reasoning with her to go and do likewise, wrapped in the sanctimonious robes or ultimate wisdom as she is.

Much of the last chapter deals with what Mann regards as "glitches" in NAGPRA. Not surprisingly, she does not like the fact that NAGPRA applies only to federal and Native lands, that it allows archaeologists to identify Native cultural groups, and that it considers only federally recognized Natives. This segues into a slapstick tale of Grandmother Crandell buying a Native American skull from an ignorant Lancaster antique dealer, then trying to get the Lancaster police and the FBI to arrest the woeful criminal, who eventually fled the area, presumably to avoid prosecution and harassment. Eventually helping to rebury the skull, Mann suffered "a nasty sore throat" as a result of an apparent glitch in the "cleansing ceremony" associated with the reburial. Then follows the fulsome diatribe on the late Raymond C. Vietzen, where nearly all of its well deserved but hardly news to anyone familiar with the Colonel or his books. Vietzen of course is an easy mark, and Mann is correct that he was "a veritable font of misinformation" - but it is a classic case of overkill (ca. 12 pages) and, typically, Vietzen is used to damn all archaeologists. (So much for any myth that Indians do not speak ill of the dead!)

In her glee to reveal what everyone already knows about Vietzen, Dr. Mann makes what is probably the most hilarious gaffe in her research, castigating Vietzen for laughing at one of his "Sioux brothers" for explaining how the Indians used "ancient" (Dr. Mann's adjective, not Vietzen's) Guffey birdstones". Though the fact escaped this Sioux Indian as well as Dr. Mann, Vietzen well knew, as does every archaeologist and artifact collector, that Guffey birdstones are 20<sup>th</sup> century fakes, by no means, "ancient" and by no means "Indian". Yet, we have a modern Indian ignorantly pontificating on how "ancient" Guffey birdstones were used. This story illustrates one of the chief reasons modern Indian mythology and oral tradition cannot be accepted without cross-checking. Another reason is the manner in which some modern Native American spokespersons would manipulate these myths and legends for political aggrandizement (cf. Deloria 1995:231), who claims that Indian stories about a giant flood "can help amend the rather artificial boundaries which the Indian Claims Commission and other agencies have forced on many tribes"). And let me here anticipate Mann's same old, tired rebuttal: of course that old Sioux knew all along that the Guffey bird was a fake, he was just pulling the Colonel's leg, as Native Americans are so wont to do with "Westerners".

Larded between her broadsides aimed at Vietzen and Moorehead, Mann also manages to touch upon well known limitations of DNA research, quickly parlaying these into the inaccurate conclusion that "DNA is, therefore, much ado about nothing". She has the zealot's gift of being able to glibly dismiss the whole with the part, whenever it suits her. Also intercalated with her dissection of Vietzen are deft accounts of the tragic story of Minuk, the young Eskimo whose father's remains stayed on display at the American Museum of natural history for years when the son wanted them reburied, and even the horrendous story of the Oklahoma land grab,

perhaps the single most egregious economic and social crime the United States has perpetrated against Native Americans. But while there can be no excuse for the Oklahoma land grab, neither can there be any excuse for the manner in which Mann selects her facts while ignoring others that might reflect less well on the Indian. Her incredible denial that the Cherokee owned African American slaves before the Civil War - that these were all simply "proto-adoptees" - is as blatant a piece of self-serving revisionism as exists (cf. Littlefield 1978, Perdue 1979). (Perhaps the Cherokee Salve Revolt of 1842 should be renamed "The Cherokee Proto-Adoptee Revolt"?) The Cherokee treatment of those freedmen who were their former slaves along with the African American interlopers trying to cash in on the land grab was based on greed just as venal and a racism just as deliberate as that more often identified with the White "intruder" and grafter, greed and racism just as real and all the more obvious in view of Mann's stated belief that "African-Native mixed bloods who are Native by culture, memory, and self-identification are Native American.

Mann is also able to overlook or ignore the fact that Moorehead, whatever his faults as a professional archaeologist, was an ardent supporter of the Cherokee and other Indian groups, influenced the Lake Mohonk Conference to recognize the plight of Indian orphans who were being cheated of their allotments in Oklahoma, and devoted years of his life trying to help the modern Indian. In fact the tragedy of Morrehead's life is not just his failure to develop acceptable field methods but also his inability to assuage the "sad condition of the Oklahoma Indians", used as a subtitle of one of his early publications on the topic.

In her urge to discredit archaeologists, Mann disparages Squier and Davis for their "Egyptian" explanation of the Cincinnati Adena tablet, when in fact Squier and Davis explicitly refuse to discuss Erasmus Gest's "hieroglyphical" interpretation of the tablet and compare it instead to Mayan stamps, a conclusion remarkably similar to that which Dr. Mann passes off as her own, without acknowledgment. Again, one has to wonder whether this is intellectual dishonesty or simply extreme carelessness in reading her sources"

whether misinformation or disinformation, it does not reflect well on her scholarship.

Yet Squier and Davis are a perfectly acceptable source when Mann wishes to inflate the number of Indian mounds in Ohio, not only citing their fantastic 1848 "high count" estimate of 10,000 (estimated, not "counted", as Mann would have it) but slyly moving the date up to the year 1870, because subsequent authors unhesitatingly cited Squier and Davis. Mann then adopts (without any documentation but apparently E. O. Randall) a 1908 estimate of 12,000, mounds before leaping to Shetrone's 1951 (actually 1938, Dr. Mann apparently unaware of the distinction between a true edition and a reprint) estimate of 5,000, implying that the difference is due to the actual destruction of 7,000 mounds between 1908 and 1951 (1938), "a sad tale of disappointed fantasies and failed stewardship". Any fantasy and failure here is strictly Mann's. Oddly enough, she ignores Mills' 1914 actual *count* of 3,513 existing mounds in Ohio, perhaps so she won't have to subtract them from her estimate of 7,000 destroyed mounds or need ponder who might have built those extra 1,487 extra mounds between 1914 and 1951! In any case, she also manages to misinterpret both Shetrone, whose 5,000 estimate was not for mounds but for "mounds, fortifications and other remains" (probably simply rounding off Mills 1914 total of 5,396 earthworks, etc.) and Randall (who estimated over 12,000 "places", which would now be called sites, not are necessarily burial mounds).

Clearly, we cannot trust Dr. Mann with numbers or facts. In the event, she has little need for either, so for her purposes it doesn't particularly matter whether they are accurate or not. Nor does she have any need for anyone else's theories or hypotheses, no matter how tentative or well-delineated, because it develops that the truth has been revealed to her by none other than Grandmother Barbara Crandell. (Since she takes pains to make clear that Dr. Gordon F. Meuser was a medical doctor without a Ph.D., perhaps I should make clear that Barbara Crandell is not her biological grandmother but her spiritual grandmother.) But whatever her sources, if we cannot trust her with easily documented facts, how can we be expected to accept undocumented oral traditions, especially when she clearly is not

adept at meshing them with the findings of modern archaeologists, historians, geologists and other scientists?

Mann's book concludes with an epilogue outlining strategies for eastern North Americans, including a highly colorized not to say fictionalized version of the confrontation between Grandmother Crandell and archaeologists at the Great Circle in Newark, in 1992, as well as a glossy, dramatic account of the Native American Association of Ohio's vendetta against the Ohio Historical Society. NAAO's political activism and lobbying, the work of a very small percentage of the Native Americans living in Ohio, undoubtedly has played a significant role in forcing the state legislature to re-examine the Society's role in protecting state records and historical sites, which is all to the good. But NAAO will not be satisfied with its Fernald Native American burial-ground nor with merely being "consulted" when OHS activities impinge upon Native American burials or "sacred: sites. It wants "Local Natives to be in charge of interpreting local Native culture and history," which, considering the manner in which they have appropriated prehistory and retooled it for their own psychic, social and political uses, would be tantamount to putting the lunatics in charge of the asylum. This is blatantly fundamentalist religion at its most aggressive, masking itself in a cloak of racial persecution. NAAO also wants Federal recognition for contemporary Indians living in Ohio, members to be determined to be traditional Native Americans by NAAO "oral criteria", criteria which would undoubtedly disqualify most of the 24,000 Native Americans currently living in the state and create a list that would very likely out-Dawes the hated Dawes rolls in terms of inaccuracy and unfairness. All of which begs, the question why, if the Hopewellian earthworks at Newark do remain an integral part of Cherokee religion, as Grandmother Barbara Crandell and Barbara Mann maintain, we have not seen more of the 6,400 plus Cherokees currently living in Ohio attempting to pray there. A common sense fear of being conked by a stray golf ball? Or could it be that Grandmother Crandell, family, friends and acolyte Barbara Mann simply represent one of the further, more idiosyncratic fringes of modern Cherokee belief?

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